

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7984

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, NI

SUBJECT: STUDENT AGITATION ERUPTS AGAIN

SUMMARY: LAST FEW DAYS HAVE SEEN FRESH OUTBREAK OF STUDENT AGITATION OVER VARIETY OF ISSUES, SOME POLITICAL, BUT FMG APPEARS IN NO MOOD FOR COMPROMISE. END SUMMARY.

1. STUDENT AGITATION WHICH BEGAN LAST MONTH OVER ASPECTS OF UDOJI AWARDS HAS TAKEN NEW TURN AND SPREAD TO EMBRACE VARIETY OF UNRELATED ISSUES.
2. MOST SERIOUS MANIFESTATIONS HAVE OCCURRED AT UNIVERSITIES OF IFE AND LAGOS. FORMER WAS COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN FEBRUARY 12 BY UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES WHEN STUDENTS REFUSED HEED ORDER TO END TWO-WEEK-OLD BOYCOTT OF CLASSES, WHILE LATTER WAS CLOSED NEXT DAY AFTER STUDENTS HAD BARRICADED CAMPUS AND BURNED SEVERAL FMG VEHICLES. DECLARED MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS IN BOTH CASES ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL, RANGING FROM DEMAND FOR RELEASE OF TWO DETAINED TEACHERS (AIR IYARE AND LAGOS UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTOR EDDY MADUNAGU, WHOSE DETENTION TWO WEEKS AGO BROUGHT TO LIGHT ONLY BY STUDENT ACTION) TO INSISTENCE ON END OF EMERGENCY RULE, BROAD CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT PRACTICE AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EVEN REMOVAL OF GOWON. THREATENED MARCH ON LAGOS BY IFE

STUDENTS WAS BANNED BY POLICE, WHO WERE ALSO DEPLOYED TO UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS IN ORDER KEEP STUDENTS THERE CONFINED TO CAMPUS.

3. UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED FEBRUARY 13 IN SUPPORT OF THEIR LAGOS AND IFE COLLEAGUES, BURNING ONE FMG VEHICLE IN THE PROCESS AND DAMAGING ANOTHER. THEY HAVE DECLARED BOYCOTT OF CLASSES, AND PRESS HAS BEGUN SPECULATE THAT IBADAN WILL ALSO BE CLOSED BY UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS. OTHER THREE UNIVERSITIES (ABU, BENIN, NSUKKA) EVIDENTLY REMAIN CALM.

4. ELSEWHERE IN NIGERIA SEVERAL SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN CLOSED BY AUTHORITIES IN WAKE OF STUDENT AGITATION. WHILE MOST TECHNICAL SCHOOLS AFFECTED BY UDOJI BOYCOTT HAVE REOPENED, KADUNA POLY-TECHNIC WAS SHUT DOWN WHEN STUDENTS IGNORED DEADLINE FOR END OF BOYCOTT AND HAS NOT YET REOPENED. SIMILAR INSTITUTION IN PORT HARCOURT WAS SHUT FOLLOWING STUDENT RIOT OVER PURELY LOCAL ISSUE, WHILE AT LEAST TWO TEACHERS COLLEGES HIT BY STUDENT BOYCOTT FOLLOWING ARREST OF STUDENT LEADERS INVOLVED IN CAMPUS RIOTING.

5. COMMENT: WITH EXCEPTION OF LAGOS, IFE, AND IBADAN, STUDENT AGITATION HAS STEMMED EITHER FROM UDOJI AFTERMATH OR FROM LOCAL ISSUES, AND APPEARS TO HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL CONTENT. STUDENT DEMANDS AT THESE THREE UNIVERSITIES, HOWEVER, ARE HIGHLY POLITICAL, AND ONE NEWSPAPER (OBSERVER) QUOTES IFE STUDENTS TO EFFECT THAT THEIR OBJECTIVE IS "TO DESTROY PRESENT SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT OR PRESENT REGIME." AS WAS CASE WITH EARLIER STUDENT AGITATION FOR RELEASE OF APER AKU, WHEN STUDENT EFFORTS ALONE PROVED INSUFFICIENT TO EFFECT HIS LIBERATION, STUDENTS APPEAR TO BE GREATLY OVERESTIMATING THEIR POLITICAL INFLUENCE. JUDGING FROM BANNING OF IFE MARCH AND SUBSEQUENT CLOSING OF IFE AND LAGOS UNIVERSITIES, FMG IS IN NO MOOD TO COMPROMISE WITH STUDENTS AT TIME WHEN IT IS FULLY OCCUPIED ON LABOR SCENE, AND WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE PACK THEM OFF TO HOME TOWNS UNTIL THEY AGREE TO BEHAVE AS REGIME WISHES.
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